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Farm Broadcasters Letter



United States Department of Agriculture Office of Information Radio-Television Division Washington D.C. 20250 (202) 447-4330

Letter No. 2415

June 2, 1989

TOO MANY CHEMICALS IN FARMING? More than three of every four Iowa farmers believe modern farming relies too heavily on chemicals, a survey by Iowa State University indicates. Paul Lasley, Iowa State University extension sociologist, and Michael Duffy, extension economist, asked farmers their opinions on low-input farming methods. Sixty-nine percent of the farmers polled said they agreed that the increased use of low-input farming practices would help maintain natural resources. Contact: Paul Lasley (515) 294-0937; Michael Duffy (515) 294-6160.

FRIENDSHIPS ARE IMPORTANT -- Parents encourage their children to develop friends, but a new study underlines the importance of having friends as you grow older. The study looked at women aged 62 to 72 who had recently become widowed. A key factor in how well a woman coped with the loss was the number of friends she reported having. "In our society, we often put all our eggs in a marriage basket," says Eloise Futrell, a family life specialist with the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service. "This research shows it may be a mistake to phase out our friends." Contact: Eloise Futrell (504) 388-4141.

PHOTO AVAILABLE -- We've got slides of Secretary of Agriculture Clayton Yeutter's official color photograph. We will have photographs of all USDA top staff as they become available. Call Marci Hilt (202) 447-6445 to get your color slide of Yeutter.

HIGH ON THE HOG -- Pig racing has become popular on the East Coast. Merle Mills, who trains pigs for his "Dash for Mash" act, is booked solid through this summer and into next. Mills has been going to state and county fairs for about five years. The glory is short lived for the pigs, though. Mills goes through five sets of pigs a season. He retires his racing pigs at three months to a feedlot. Contact: Merle Mills (301) 926-2036.



GREENHOUSE EFFECT? The water in the world's oceans appears to be rising a tenth of an inch per year, which could indicate the planet is indeed warming up, a pair of Canadian researchers recently reported. W. R. Pelteir and A. M. Tushingham of the University of Toronto said: "It would not be surprising ... if the direct action of the expected enhancement of the greenhouse effect were first observed through an indirect response such as an increase in global sea level." USDA's Chief Meteorologist Norton Strommen says the Canadian study is sound. Contact: Norton Strommen (202) 447-9805.

HERB MARKETING COMES OF AGE -- Herbs are becoming big business. USDA began issuing a weekly fresh herb market news report May 3. "Interest in fresh herbs and herb marketing has increased greatly in the past few years," says J. Patrick Boyle, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service. The new report lists wholesale herb prices from 19 wholesale markets. Contact: Clarence Steinberg (202) 447-6179.

NEED SOME HERB HELP? USDA's Janet Walker can tell you everything you've ever wanted to know about herbs. Most herbs should be pruned -- that's how they remain attractive, says Walker, who is curator of the herb collection at USDA's National Arboretum. Basils now available include lemon (for chicken and fish), Spicy Globe (beautiful for container planting), Dark Opal (makes a superb vinegar) and Italian sweet basil (essential for cooking). Contact: Janet Walker on (202) 475-4865.

ANIMAL RESEARCH LABS BESIEGED -- Increasingly, research scientists who use animals in their research are enduring death threats, bomb scares and a torrent of obscene phone calls from increasingly militant activists, the Washington Post recently reported. With growing success, animal rights activists are forcing universities from California to Connecticut to spend millions on extra security and to reconsider nearly every use of experimental animals. The debate has taken on an emotional intensity unheard of in the scientific community. What's happening in your state could be a good story.



RECOGNIZE ANYONE? Cindy Zimmerman, Florida Agrinet, Ocala, Fla., sent us this photo of Secretary of Agriculture Clayton Yeutter and U.S. Representative Cliff Stearns (D-Fla.) meeting with Cindy and other reporters on Yeutter's recent tour of agricultural areas in Florida.

"AFRICANIZED BEE" TRAITS UNDILUTED -- The advancing front of "killer bees" that has been buzzing steadily northward toward the U.S. is not a hybrid mix of European and African bees, as many scientists had believed, but a race of nearly pure African honey bees. The genetic finding by scientists in Florida, Michigan and Kansas runs counter to USDA's effort to try to "dilute" the gene pool of the bees as they advance through Mexico. Some of USDA's work to stop and control the African honey bees include: Producing bacteria which would kill the African bees but not kill the European bees; finding natural and synthetic compounds to repel the bees; safe methods to trap and kill the African bees near outdoor recreation areas. Contact: Thomas E. Rinderer (504) 766-6064.

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1669 -- Farming and the environment are closely linked together and so are the two government agencies responsible for those subjects. Pat O'Leary presents a look at the new agricultural consultant at the Environmental Protection Agency. (Weekly 13-1/2 min. documentary)

AGRITAPE #1658 -- USDA news highlights; EPA's new ag. consultant; "Farmer Mac" goes to Washington; Small U.S. food companies jumping into exports. (Weekly reel of news features)

CONSUMER TIME #1151 -- Rules for rose gardens; Too much mulch; Is your child ready to stay alone?; Diet "magic bullets"; Private wells and water contamination. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 - 3 min. features)

USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Wed., June 7, Horticultural exports; Mon., June 12, U.S. crop production report, USSR crop outlook, World ag. supply and demand; Tues., June 13, Crop/weather update, World ag/grain production, World oilseed situation, World cotton situation; Thurs., June 15, Sugar/sweeteners outlook, Western Europe outlook.

DIAL THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359. Material changed at 5 p.m. EDT each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION NEWS SERVICE

AGRICULTURAL UPDATE and USDA NEWS SERVICE are available on satellite Westar IV, audio 6.2 or 6.8:

THURSDAY 7:30-7:45 p.m., EDT, Transponder 12D

SATURDAY 10:30-11:15 a.m., EDT, Transponder 10D

MONDAY 8:30-9:15 a.m., EDT, Transponder 12D
(Repeat of Saturday transmission)

OFF MIKE

GREATEST...rainfall occurs at this time of year says Curt Lancaster (VSA, San Angelo, Texas), and it's really needed in the southern panhandle. While sections of north and west Texas have improved and hay situation in east and central areas is OK, the 108-degree temperatures and nearly matching humidity are hurting the southern region. Says cattle numbers are down.

LOWER...cattle numbers are also noted by Mike Wiles (KTTS, Springfield, Mo.). Tall grass in green pastures in his listening area indicates reduced use.

RIVER...levels could be low again this year, especially the Mississippi, says Norton Strommen (USDA chief meteorologist). Ohio River basin has been getting ample moisture, keeping levels above a year ago, and indicating the Mississippi may not drop to levels as low as last year. Too early to predict degree of impact on barge traffic.

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RECENT...additions to the radio network were highlighted in a note from Betty Toennisson (Agri Broadcasting Network, Columbus, Ohio); 76 stations now on board. On the TV side of ABN, Betty says 3 stations will be added in September, raising the network to 13 stations in Ohio, Indiana and Michigan.

NINETEEN...minute TV documentary "Alternative Agriculture: Growing Concerns" is available from Dave Carter (USDA-EMS) (202) 786-1494. Edited from the original five-part series about low input sustainable agriculture produced by USDA's Pat O'Leary.

NICE...note from Lew Middleton (Agri-Business Network, Indianapolis). Says he plans to place us on his schedule when visiting Washington, D.C. Let us know when you are in town; we'll give you the studio tour.

VIC POWELL, Chief, Radio and Television Division